

March 20, 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) CFS Practice Guidance – Child Abuse Committee

Child Abuse Committee (CAC) regulations set guidelines for agencies to follow regarding the operations of Child Abuse Committees. Public health measures to support social distancing, including limiting in-person meetings, affects agencies' ability to ensure requirements are met. This information is intended to help guide your response during COVID-19.

Are CAC meetings an essential service?

A previous document was circulated to help identify and differentiate between child welfare urgent and essential services. Urgent services include situations where current child safety is potentially at risk.

CAC meetings are therefore deemed non-urgent, as there are no immediate child safety concerns. The referral to the CAC is essential. At this time, CAC meetings should be deferred for 60 days. This timeline be reassessed in the future.

Are referrals to CACs to continue?

As per 7(1) of the regulations, a referral to the CAC should be made within 30 days from when an agency believes a child may have been abused. All efforts should continue to be made to refer matters to the CAC within 30 days. Referrals should be made electronically or via paper to ensure social distancing. Agencies can use a condensed form to expedite the process if deemed necessary.

If a referral is delayed beyond the 30-day window due to other essential and urgent work, this would need to be highlighted in the referral documentation.

Should CAC meetings still occur?

In order to meet quorum at least three of the mandatory members appointed under subsection 3(2) are required to be present. At this time, meetings should be deferred for 60 days and documented in the minutes

Should CACs continue to give notices?

CACs are responsible to provide a Notice of Opportunity. As the regulations do not specify timelines this, Notices of Opportunity can be deferred.

The regulations also do not dictate a requirement for CACs to vote within a specific timeline of case deliberations. It is **recommended that all voting matters be deferred.**

Once a vote is taken and service occurs for a Notice of Intent to Register, the offender has 60 days to file. Courts are currently only processing urgent matters and this may affect their ability to meet this timeline.

In the event an agency has already voted, attempts to provide notice need to occur. If an individual cannot be contacted, the agency's attempts should be documented.

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Can I still submit Child Abuse Registry Checks (CAR)?

Agencies should continue to submit CAR and PCC applications for processing. Forms and instructions for child and family services agencies are available through the Child and Family Services Information System.

There are two application forms:

1.) CAR-CFSI – Application for a Child Abuse Registry Check – CFS Investigation

These forms are used when investigating a child in need of protection. No consent is required by the subject of the record. It is not used for screening a person unless risk factors are identified. These can be processed by agency staff with access.

2.) CAR-CFSO – Application for a Child Abuse Registry Check – Other

These forms are used to assess individuals applying to provide work or services to an agency, including potential employees (including respite providers), foster home applicants, family residences to be used a place of safety, adoptive applicants, volunteers and students. It can also be used to screen individuals having contact with or in relationship with children and families receiving services. Forms must be submitted to the Registry Unit for processing.

Can I still submit Prior Contact Checks (PCC)?

Direct access has been provided to limited agency staff to access forms for PCCs.

Am I able to contact the Registrar to obtain additional information about someone currently/previously on the registry?

Yes. If you learn an individual is or was on the registry, you can contact the Registrar via email at breanne.manastyrsky@gov.mb.ca and request additional information.